

MINUTES

Underhill Conservation Commission
November 11, 2014
Underhill Town Hall

Present: Trevor Squirrell (chair), Barbara Greene, Karen McKnight, Dan Steinbauer, Dave Rogers, Pat Lamphere, Nancy McRae, Merianne O'Grady

Opening Remarks: Trevor called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. It was pointed out that all members, thus a quorum, were present.

Cranebrook Trail Ordinance - update: It was reported that litigation is still ongoing. Dave is a member of the Select Board. He offered to determine its status at the next SB meeting and report back to UCC members in December.

Invasive Education / Outreach Project: Per Trevor, the individuals who indicated they would each strongly consider running the November 8th invasives workshop both cancelled. Therefore, we will postpone it until sometime in early Spring 2015. When a date is decided, Trevor will ask one or both of them re: availability and also consider other possible workshop leaders.

We discussed whether to offer the workshop in conjunction with field-work, or to schedule them separately. It was suggested that a good strategy might be to hold the workshop first and perhaps raise interest in a field-work project later in Spring, when the invasive plants are starting to sprout. So, it was agreed that we should offer the invasive workshop sometime around mid-April to beginning of May, followed by the work-project in mid-to-late May. This would also take into account Spring vacation for the local schools and thus could involve middle-school students who had done field-work with UCC several years ago. Trevor will look at the vacation schedule, contact possible workshop/field-work leader/s, and then propose dates for both by the next UCC meeting.

Town Plan 2015 - Chapter 1: Natural Resources - discussion:

(NOTE: Prior to beginning discussion of the Natural Resources chapter, Trevor mentioned the Upland Project, which was a collaborative effort by the towns of Underhill, Jericho, and Richmond, with the input of a consultant. This project was initiated several years ago. The goal was to clarify and update previous mapping by the State of large habitat blocks within the contiguous boundaries of the three towns. The state had analyzed data via remote sensing, and made the resulting data sets available. Overlays of these blocks were to be generated within a 2-year period during Winter through direct in the field observation by teams from each town of native species traveling along corridors recording wildlife tracks during the winter. Each member had previously attended a class to familiarize themselves with the actual tracks and how to collect data on the frequency and concentration of species which cross between and

within the defined habitat blocks. At the end of the Project, the data was analyzed and a data-set was produced. UCC had considered continuing the Project and adding to the data sets, but has not yet done so. It was pointed out that now Smart phones have apps that can be utilized for this purpose. Also, it might be possible to have the Underhill road crew become involved in the collection of data. The species which were observed during the Upland Project included mink, fisher, deer, fox, moose, bear and otter, among others.)

Trevor reviewed recent history of changes to the Town Plan, stating that it underwent a total rewrite in 2010. This next iteration (2015) will principally be a revision/update of the 2010 Plan.

Discussion:

Section 1.0 Overview - no comments

Section 1.1 Forestry - clarification needed in the sentence “4004 acres are also enrolled in Town Contracts although it is not clear how this acreage is being used other than being protected from subdivision.” Discussion as to the definitions and difference between the terms “current use” and “town contracts”. Dave added that the Select Board will be looking to fine-tune the latter, which currently has no specific goal or policy statement, and is much too vague to be really effective/useful.

Section 1.2 Agriculture - Trevor offered to update/ check the data within this section for accuracy. Pat suggested that hunting and fishing should be addressed under Agriculture. It was suggested that this could be included under *Social Benefits - Space for Recreation*.

Section 1.3 Open Space Planning - Per Trevor, this topic is of high priority for both the UCC and the Underhill Planning Commission. Establishing an Open Space Plan would provide the town Developmental Review Board with a more defined way of determining the judicious use and management of land within the town’s boundaries for future posterity. In addition, it would provide a mechanism for development of natural resource overlay districts so, for example, wildlife corridors could be discerned and mapped.

Section 1.4 Water Quality

Surface Waters: Trevor reviewed the Browns River Corridor Plan’s Phase i and Phase 2 geomorphic assessments which were completed with the goal of establishing a community-based management plan for the Brown’s River and its tributaries.

Water Quality & Storm Water: Questions regarding the effects of phosphorus concentrations and loads on the Browns River watershed, principally from nearby agricultural practices, were raised. Trevor pointed out that flow of such chemicals into Lake Champlain from the Browns River were more significant from down-stream sources than from portions of the river from more up-steam Underhill sources.

Per Trevor, discussion of the remaining sections of the 2015 Town Plan's Natural Resource Chapter will be continued at upcoming UCC meetings.

Approval of 9/8/14 UCC Minutes: (Note - due to lack of a quorum, no minutes were generated at the 10/20/14 meeting.) September's minutes were accepted and approved with one correction noted: Member Nancy McRae's last name was incorrectly spelled.

New Business: No new business was presented.

Adjournment: The motion to adjourn was moved by Dave Rogers and seconded by Pat Lamphere. The meeting was officially adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Merianne O'Grady, 11-12-14 **DRAFT.**

Final
TJH 12/8/14

